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ABSTRACT

This paper begins with the following quote from Michel Foucault: "People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does." The context of the paper and the policy directions considered encompass the past decade and take the National Curriculum as an intervention in curriculum that rehabilitated standards to signify the neoconservative, restorationist, or neocorporate agenda that replaces and works against the progressivist education of the 1960s and 1970s. Although the National Curriculum project did not rely upon the use of standards, the structure and emphasis in the "Elements of the Profile" are on levels, level statements, outcomes, pointers, and work samples. The paper finds that a sample of recent literature and commentary on standards reveals: (1) the currently high levels of popular community support for an education addressing the standards are welcomed by politicians and expressed through statutory authorities; (2) there is a contention about standards in the measurement field; and (3) standards policy frameworks do not guarantee improvement or quality reform. Each of these represents a set of problems for art education. Within art education several attempts have been made to articulate a position about standards that will enable a standards discourse to work for art educators, and it reviews the papers which comprise these attempts. Contains 35 references. (BT)

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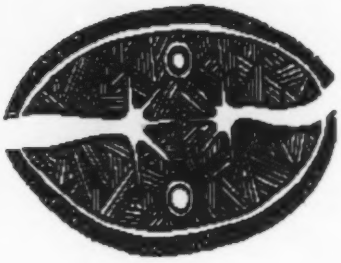

InSEA

"A Foucauldian Report on Standards and Testing in Art Education Curriculum"

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A FOUCAULDIAN REPORT ON STANDARDS AND TESTING IN ART EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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"People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does" (Michel Foucault in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 187).

The context of this paper and the policy directions considered encompass the past decade and take the National Curriculum as an intervention in curriculum that rehabilitated standards to signify the neoconservative, restorationist or neo corporate agenda that replaces and works against the progressivist education of the 1960s and 1970s. Although the national curriculum project did not rely upon the use of standards, the structure and emphasis in the 'Elements of the profile' is on levels, level statements, outcomes, pointers and work samples. Declaring that "The statements do not provide a syllabus" (1994 iii) the National Curriculum Project has been taken up by state curriculum instrumentalities as a text and instrument of assessment (Curriculum Corporation 1994a; Curriculum Corporation 1994b). More overtly in the United Kingdom, standards have been implemented and embedded in the establishment of the *Office for Standards in Education* who publish reports on schools and the curriculum (Office for Standards in Education 1998; Office for Standards in Education 1996). It is widely acknowledged that during the national curriculum exercise the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports firmly articulated the authority of competencies to complete and confirm the shift from inputs to outputs in education (Apple 1996; Apple 1993a; Apple 1993b; Ball 1994; Collins 1995; Collins 1994; Connell 1996).

In New South Wales revisions and curriculum inquiries led by Eltis (1995) and more recently and to greater effect McGaw (1996a; 1996b) have focussed on objectives and outcomes. McGaw 's inquiry and reform proposals are funded by the earlier national curriculum project and in its implementation has largely ignored other aspects of curriculum work and reform. The enterprise of curriculum is increasingly the business of assessment, decreasingly of content and the slogan is 'what students can do' (Aquilina 1997).

A sample of recent literature and commentary on standards reveals these things: the currently high levels of popular community support for an education addressing standards is welcomed by politicians and expressed through statutory authorities (Linn 1978); there is contention about standards in the measurement field (Berk 1996; Cizek 1996; Cizek 1993; Norcini J and Shea J 1997; Popham 1978; Wiliam 1996) standards policy frameworks do not guarantee improvement or quality reform (Ivory 1997, Eisner 1994). Each of these represent a set of problems for art education.

1. *The currently high levels of popular community support for an education addressing standards is welcomed by politicians and expressed through statutory authorities.* In NSW the Premier Mr Carr has openly identified standards and testing as an electorally popular and successful issue. The most recent educational reforms in curriculum entail increased testing in primary schools and 'new' School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations. Similarly, President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union speech called for national standards of student academic achievement. The National Educational Summit in March 1996 continued to identify standards as the instrument to improve education and Clinton extended his original recommendation for standards to include standardised testing. Ball has extensively documented and critiqued the emergence of national curricula standards in the United Kingdom (Ball 1994).

2. *There is contention about standards in the measurement field.* The tentative use of standards is evidenced in the literature. Standards are driven by measurement theory and technologies, including the capacity to produce copious statistics and data; as Foucault observes "one began to count in quarter seconds" (1977 150). Yet within this field there is no certainty or confidence of the assumed precision and

advances with which standards are invested. Even when standards are not being used as psychometric constructs authority is gained by association with science (Ball 1990 4). Berk reports that "after two decades of research and practice with standard setting, the measurement community is a smidgen closer now than it was then to grappling with the pesky and prickly complexities of the process. At present, there are nearly 50 standard-setting methods documented in the literature" (1996 215).

3. *Standards policy frameworks do not guarantee improvement or reform quality*. Standards, as a discourse of evaluation will not guarantee improved student performance and have limited use in art education. Brown identified the capricious and arbitrary activity that is standard setting and their invitation to coach students up for particular testing events (1998). Eisner says, "The current emphasis on standards will provide no panacea in education" (1993 23), whilst Ivory asserts, "that while clear standards are a necessary component of a quality education, there is not evidence that standards by themselves lead to educational reforms ... the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, which tested randomly selected students from 41 countries (and) found no correlation between the existence of national standards and how well a country's students perform" (1997 6).

The misrecognition of standards

Within art education several attempts have been made to articulate a position about standards that will enable a standards discourse to work for us. Recent examples include a short paper by Eisner in which he says, "'standards' has multiple meanings. Standards can refer to those targets at which one aims. Standards can serve as icons against which student performance is compared. The term 'standard' can also refer to something that is common or typical. Standards are sometimes used in relation to a rite of passage that provides access to future opportunities. For example, 'He has met the standards we have set and is now able to practice medicine'" (1993 22).

More recently, three papers in *Studies in Art Education*, by Boughton, Hausman and Beattie further discuss standards and seek the most acceptable and workable, beneficial definition. Boughton, after Eisner, suggests that standards must be understood by reexamining distinctions in meaning between criteria and objectives. He says, "standards can be described in two ways: either as a unit which serves as a standard of measurement (like a gold metre kept at constant temperature) or as a level of performance (like a perfectly executed dive from the highboard) ... the latter description of the notion of standard is somewhat more appropriate to the visual arts than the former" (1997 201).

Boughton and Beattie suggest Sadler's distinction between standards and criteria be employed: "a definite level of excellence or attainment, or a definite degree of any quality viewed as a prescribed object of endeavour or as the recognised measure of what is adequate for some purpose, so established by authority, custom or consensus" (Beattie 1997 218; Boughton 1997 202). Boughton, drawing on paradigm theory and Yvonna Lincoln's work on interpretive and qualitative research, contends that communities of practitioners can be 'arbiters of quality.' In this scenario the field of art education through the agency of experts set and administer the practices and values of standards as in a Kuhnian paradigm. Standards in this case become part of the consensus, beliefs and identity of art education and operate to position and promote the values of the subject.

These endeavours however, continue to identify the problem with standards as one of definition, whereby finding or isolating a meaning and a practice that can be agreed to by the field, solves the dilemma standards present. If we imagine that standards once fixed and understood can be used to produce or contribute to improvement and so advance the interests of the visual arts we ignore the wider political origins and contexts of standards discourse. Discourses, or disciplines, conceal their origins. But when analysed as a genealogy, origins, the emergence and the sovereignty of a discourse are exposed "reveal(ing) how a discipline has developed norms of validity and objectivity" (Gutting 1989 xi). This means no matter how diligent and serious we are in trying to find and possess the meaning of standards, in the belief it is an asset, we misrecognise the normative grounds and in turn the capabilities of standards discourse. Foucault describes this as a struggle, where "discourse is the power which is to be seized" (1984 110).

If standards cannot be realised as an ideal, nor freely managed by teachers, another authority produces their significance. Applying Foucault, and I believe anecdotally, following a similar line of inquiry by David Hamilton, I suggest standards is delimited by and refers to the class or grade, to the classification, placement or position of the student within a group and against other groups. Standards are a dividing practice whereby common norms are expected and reproduced, Standards are not honorific discourses that we can show have been repaired, raised and improved as further evidence of the virtues of art education in the curriculum.

Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* writes at length about normalising judgement and dividing practices as "the means of correct training" (1977 170 - 194). For the purposes of this paper I quote Stephen Ball who says, "'dividing practices are central to the organisational processes of education in our society. These divisions and objectifications are achieved either within the subject or between the subject and others. The use of testing, examining, profiling and streaming in education, the use of entry criteria for different types of schooling ... the creation of remedial and advanced groups, and the separation of the educationally subnormal or those with special educational needs, abilities are stigmatised and normalised" (1990 4). Put another way, standards are instruments of 'omnes et singulatim', or one and the many. The discursive practices of standards act to control the student and the teacher (Weate 1998).

Standards discourses in education have, I contend, their origins in the nineteenth century monitorial school system. In support of this claim I turn to Donald's account of late nineteenth century education, and, as an introductory inquiry the extended Oxford dictionary where standards are identified as "recognised degrees of proficiency" and descend from the principal military usage of standards as the "flag, sculptured figure, or other conspicuous object, raised on a pole to indicate the rallying point of an army" (814).

Donald reports that by the 1860s in England and resulting in Forster's Education Reform Act of 1870, the cost of education was tied to achievement, indeed, "that teacher's salaries should be made partly dependent on children's results was greeted more warmly by politicians, who shared the generally low opinion of teachers and were committed to reducing public expenditure" (1992 25). Donald notes, "an emerging conception of popular education as a technique of government close to Foucault's notion of bio-politics and Donzelot's policing of families" (1992 29).

The monitorial schools, using hierarchical systems attributed to Bell and Lancaster, depended on methods of classification and organisation to place students in groups and to attribute roles within these panoptic spaces and practices to students, monitors and teachers. Illustrations of the monitorial schools show large halls with the designated group spaces marked out by posts and flags. The posts and flags classify the group and define their teaching space. Pedagogy depended on the monitors, who after being taught by the 'master' would teach a group whilst other monitors marked rolls, prepared materials, organised tests and promoted successful students to the next standard. The entire exercise was regimented, precise and routine. This was efficient mass education.

Teacher knowledge is distributed and diffused through the monitor, marginalising the teacher as overseer, but ensuring the precision of the system. Stow's renovation of the Lancastrian school along with the introduction of recitation and instruction techniques refocussed on the teacher and was succeeded by architect designed classrooms. The flag and post continue to designate the group standard, as 'lesson-posts' are fixed around the room, decorated with objects and pictures related to the teaching content for that group. The large groups of students are divided into smaller groupings, a classification sustained by measurement ensuring that any member of the group is identified by their similarity with each other, and their demonstrated standard competence. Standards distinguish and separate groups from each other. "Each group or 'standard' should be taught in a separate classroom", says Donald (1992, 35).

This genealogical sketch reveals standards as the familiar discourses of organising students and content, of classifying (the class). *The Oxford English Dictionary in Twelve Volumes, Volume X*, amongst thirty possible definitions of standards, makes explicit reference to standards in educational contexts consistent with these discursive origins: "Standard, In British elementary schools: each of the recognised degrees of proficiency, as tested by examination, according to which children are classified. The sixth is the highest standard which children are ordinarily required to pass, the seventh being intended mainly for those who are to become teachers". (Murray 815). The entry continues and shows examples of standards in use according to this meaning:

"1876 Lubbock *Elementary Education*, in *Contemporary Review*, June, The classes from which the children are examined in Standards II - VI

1894 *Times* 22 March he was in the class of which defendant was teacher — viz., the seventh standard

1899 Albutt's *Systematic Medicine* VIII in some schools there is a standard ... for dull or backward children

1902 Violet Jacob *Sheep - Stealers* xv, When the village urchins are still wrestling with the fourth 'standard'.

attrib. 1891 Hardy *Tess* xix, She was expressing in her own native phrases — assisted a little by her Sixth Standard training — feelings which

1903 A McNeill *Egregious English* i Nature, like the seventh - standard boy in a board school 'can get no higher'" (Oxford 815).

In each example the standard is the predetermined level of student performance. Standards can be recognised within this discursive formation of accountability as a dividing practice rather than a positive value.

Standard in these examples refers to the competency of the student according to fixed, common and normalised measures. Standards recognised in these terms appear as yet another mechanism of control.

The received uses of standards as currently applied in discursive practices of art education assessment, evaluation and examination when problematised, rather than ideally defined, suggest another inquiry toward understanding their meaning and purpose. A genealogical method underpins this alternative account of how standards can be understood as sustaining and being complicit with the dividing practices of normalising judgement. Art education as a field, among others in education, has misrecognised present standards policies as an issue of quality within which we can, indeed, it could be argued are obliged, to prove our worth. Standards are yet another discourse of control and fall within a genealogy of objectives, outcomes, competencies, profiles, pointers, levels and benchmarks. When recognised as this discourse the current investment in defining and prescribing standards is exposed as misrecognition.

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